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To: The Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges
From: Sen. Dan Feyen
Re: Senate Bill 407

Ms. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing today.

This legislation was originally part of the Governor's budget. It was removed by the Joint Finance Committee when all non-fiscal policy was removed from the budget. My office then took an interest in the policy and decided to author it as separate legislation.

Everyone wants to talk about college debt. I prefer to talk about college affordability. The UW System tuition freeze has made significant strides towards keeping the cost of college low in Wisconsin. However, I think we should be continuously looking at all avenues possible to reduce the amount of money students have to pay for an undergraduate degree. Lower costs = lower debt!

I see this legislation as a method of keeping college affordable. Encouraging students to take college-level classes in high school, whether through a dual enrollment program, distance learning, AP classes, IB classes, or another method is meaningless if we don't ensure the UW System is providing students credit for those classes when they enter into a two-year or four-year institution.

However, I understand concerns about maintaining rigor. I agree that UW Schools should have the ability to keep their standards high and not be forced to accept any credit earned as equivalent to a UW System credit. I believe the test for competency provision in this bill provides an outlet to accomplish both goals: maintain the value and rigor of a UW System degree while also ensuring students are earning credit if they possess a solid understanding of the material they studied.

This legislation has no fiscal effect. It is simply a common-sense policy to keep college costs low by allowing students at UW System schools to get credit where credit is due. If you have mastered the material, you deserve the credit. A uniform policy stating so would provide certainty for high school students across the state that their investments in higher education in high school are worthy of the additional time and money they require.

Thank you for your time today. I welcome any questions you may have.



JOEL KITCHENS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 1ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony for the Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges

Senate Bill 407

Wednesday, October 11, 2017

Thank you Chair Harsdorf and committee members for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 407. I regret that I could not appear before you today to discuss the merits of this bill.

As lawmakers, it is our responsibility to make sure that we set up our state's children for success and this bill is a simple tool to make their road to success just a little bit smoother. This is a no cost piece of legislation that would help alleviate some of the potential debt that the average Wisconsin college student might accrue by allowing them to receive credit for any college-level course that they took during high school.

The language in this bill was a part of the governor's proposed budget and was removed by the Joint Finance Committee as it was a non-fiscal policy item. This bill does not change the standards that the UW System has for awarding credits. What this bill does is ensure that a student who has shown the required level of understanding in a course actually receives the appropriate credit without having to take the course again in college, thus saving them the two most important resources a college student has, time and money.

In regards to the amount of money that a student might potentially save as a result of this bill, it is important to remember that a student pays for more than just tuition while in college. Books, supplies, and pass codes for digital resources are all extra costs that become even more frustrating for a student when it is for a course that is equivalent to what they have already taken prior to college. Why would we want our college students to be financially punished this way for showing initiative in high school? If we want our students to stay motivated in the Wisconsin school system and take college-level classes, we need to show them that there will be a tangible benefit once they reach college.

This is a common sense bill that is in keeping with the state's efforts to keep the path of continuing education affordable for our youth.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my testimony on this bill and I hope I can count on your support.